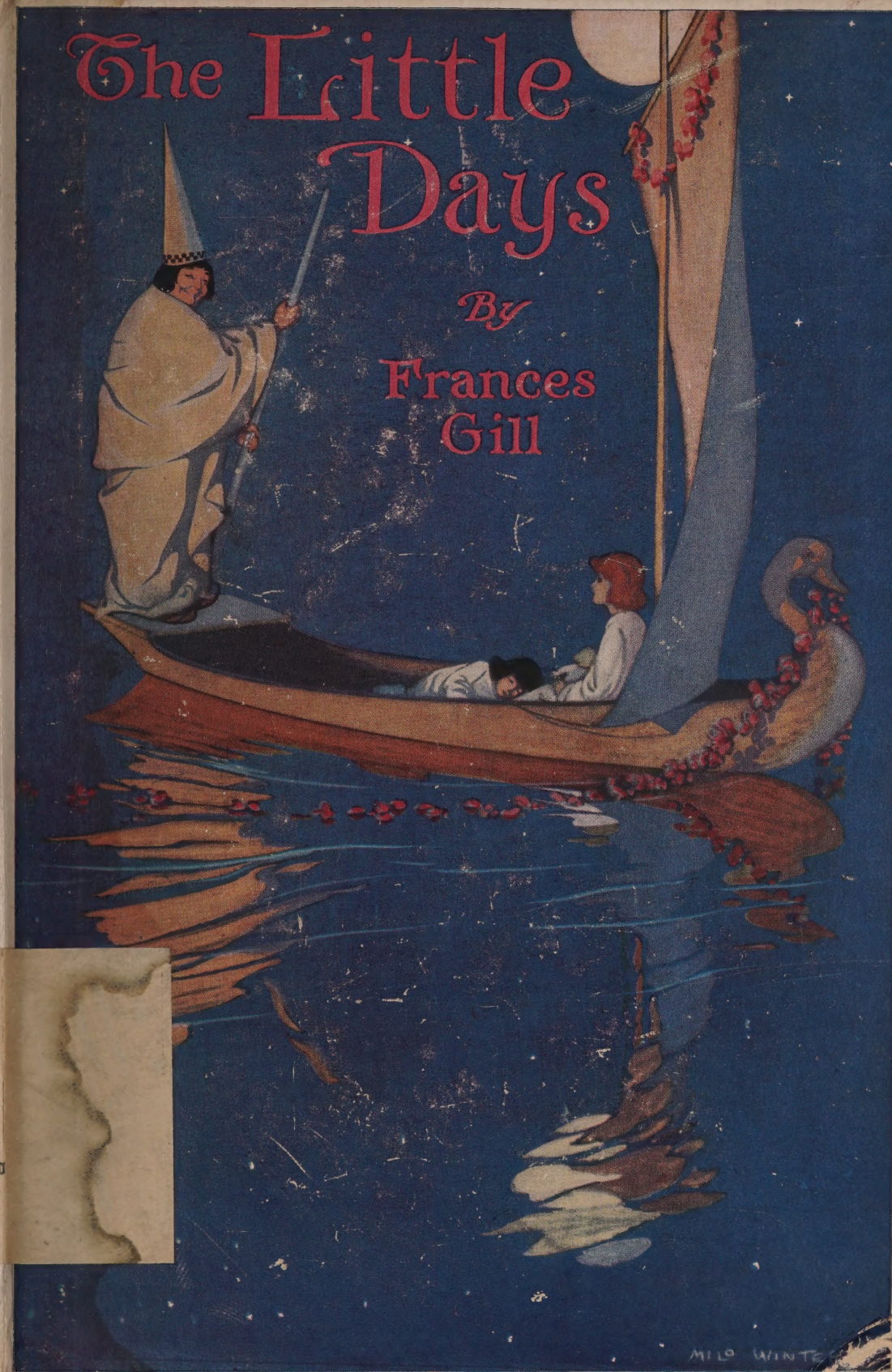
The Little Days

By

Frances Gill



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THE LITTLE DAYS

TINKER-BELL

THE LITTLE DAYS

BY

FRANCES GILL

With Illustrations by Milo Winter

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To the Memory of my Mother

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THE LITTLE DAYS

The little days behind us —
Those days when earth was new;
The world yet undiscovered;
And all things lovely, true; —
Oh little days — dear little days!
Help us, awhile, to hold
Our gold-pots with our rainbows; —
That we may not grow old.

THE CONCERT

They nearly did n't take me!
They said, "He 's very young to go;
But still, — we have the tickets,
And we all want to hear it, — so
Perhaps this once won't hurt him."
Just suppose I had n't gone!

The theater was full of Lights; and People everywhere
Had pretty clothes on, and were gay. It was so lovely there!
There were so many things to see; I 'd hardly looked around,
When it grew dark, quite suddenly. There was a shiv'ry sound
Like dry, brown leaves in autumn; and they said, "The curtain 's up."

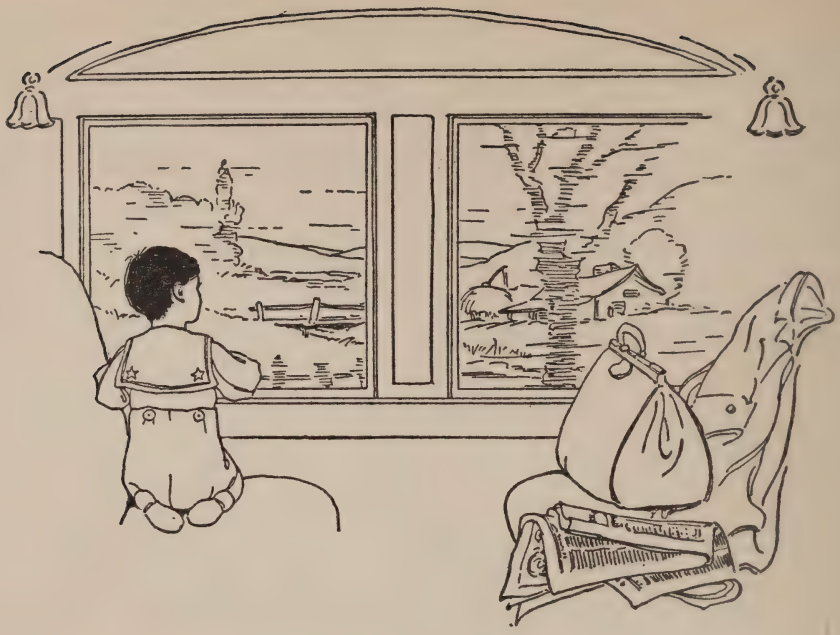
A big Man stood alone, in front. He waited to begin.
I could hear my heart beat, till he touched his Violin;
Touched it with a wooden stick, a thing they called his bow;
Up, and down, and down again, how fast he made it go!
'T was wonderful to watch him.

And then, I did n't watch at all. I shut my eyes, and played
That I saw fairies dancing, to the music that he made.
I saw a forest black and tall. I met a fir-green elf,
Who sang the songs the Big Man played. I sang with him, myself;
But no one heard us, singing.

Next he played a really song, a baby lullaby.
I saw a fairy cradle, and I heard a fairy cry.
I saw things while the Music was; and after all the ends,
The Man came to the front, and smiled; and we were friends.
I think he's very friendly.

But soon they said, "It's over now! Come, dear! it's time to go."
The theater was light again. It was so very slow
To get out to the street. But when I lay in bed,
I heard the Concert all again — away back, in my head.
I wonder if the Man saw me.

And they nearly did n't take me!
Just suppose I had n't gone!



THE TRAVEL-DAY WITH FATHER

I. PICTURES

JUST sitting-going, travel is,
And watching pictures pass;
A never-ending line of them
Outside the window-glass.
The window stays, the pictures go.
Trees, hills, and valleys come.
I 'll forget a lot of them,
But I 'll remember some.

A little town, at shadow-time, before the lights are lit;
The streets all quiet, and tired, I think; — a river runs through it.

The clock-tower, too, is almost dark; it sings a
music chime,
And counts out five, to tell its folk it 's almost supper-
time.

And here 's a house all open wide,
And eating supper, there inside,
The family are; — they wave at me!
I wonder what they 're eating —

A gray-green river, winding slow between fresh
maple trees
That ripple in the water, and whisper in the breeze.

Here 's a hillside, shady, too,
And sweet as sweet! For Violets blue
Are growing there. They smile surprise
To see us. — They 're like Mother's eyes.

Oh! you lovely!
Can't you stay?
A blue-white crane is standing
In grassy water there.
Oh! there he flies away!
His wings are all white underneath,
Oh! come with us — this way!

A farmer's wagon, the children crowded in
On top of bales of hay — I wonder where they 've been,
And who they are, and where they play.
And if I 'll see them any more, after to-day.

II. PLAYING LATE

A dirty brown house, all alone;
And one boy, playing late,
Riding on his broken gate.
He was so quickly gone
I could n't see how it was done.
— He 's playing by himself, I guess,
And I ride on alone.

III. THE MOUNTAIN

We cannot see the Mountain, no,
Because the clouds are there,
All black, and thick as anything.
But Father 's showed me where
The Mountain stands, and how it looks
And showed the pictures in the books;
So I shall know it, surely, when
I 'm traveling this way again.

It 's cold wherever mountains are.
It frosts the windows of the car.
We have to brush it off to see
Just where the Mountain ought to be.
Clouds, won't you go away?

IV. WHAT WAS IT?

The queer Thing lay beside the track.
Could it have been a bird
With ruffled feathers, brown and black?

But it never stirred
When we went pounding by.

I looked behind, and I could see
The Thing — 't was like a cat,
A wild-cat maybe, could it be
Just sitting still like that,
And our train rushing by?

Perhaps it only was a stone;
Or, maybe, some dead giant's bone —
Perhaps he died there, all alone.
We 've passed it now, and it is gone.
It might be — Oh!
A lot of things
And I don't know.

V. WHEN FATHER GOT OUT

We 've stopped. I did n't see him go.
But I 've looked into his seat-house, and oh!
My Daddy is n't there!
People look so different, outside;
I see them all. I 've tried and tried
To see where he has gone. But he is n't anywhere!
The bell rings, and the engine 's whistling loud
They all get on again, in such a crowd;
But not a single one of them is Father.
Oh! If he does n't come! I 've got no money,
And the train men all will think it funny

To see me here alone.
Everybody looks at me.
It 's dreadful — dreadful as can be
Tears keep coming — I feel cold everywhere —
I wish the people coming would n't stare —
It 's hard to breathe — there is n't any air
And then —
"Oh! goody! goody! Daddy dear, you 're there!"

VI. BED

Mother told me how 't would be
When it was time for sleep.

The seat I sat in, all day long,
Slips down, and lies quite flat.
The standing box-thing, up on top
Comes down; and out of that
The mattress, blankets, pillows, sheet.
All these are spread for me
As smooth, and straight, and just as neat
As bed at home could be.
A long green curtain shuts it in
A great white "Seven" on it.
The Porter calls, "All ready, son."
I can't see how he 's done it.
Inside, a light is by my head;
Above me, like a mirror
The shining, polished top-shelf is;
Could any bed be queerer?

Without the light, it 's very dark.
But sitting up to peep
At things outside the windows
Is a lot more fun than sleep.

Oh ! what a lovely, lovely day —
How those curtains swing, and sway.
Mother told me how 't would be,
But still my bed surprises me.
My little hammock sounds like rain,
Swishing on the window-pane.
I love to ride, — and sleep this way
It 's been — a — lovely — lovely — day.

MOTHER'S CLOTHES

My mother's clothes, they change her so!
She 's several kinds of people.

Morning-times, when she 's at home
And I 'm about with her,
She 's just a child 'bout my own age;
She never seems to care
If she gets mussed or wrinkled, then;
But sings and sews and plays,
In a silk or gingham house-dress,
Mornings, and rainy days.

When she goes out, she 's different;
Brown suit and silky hat,

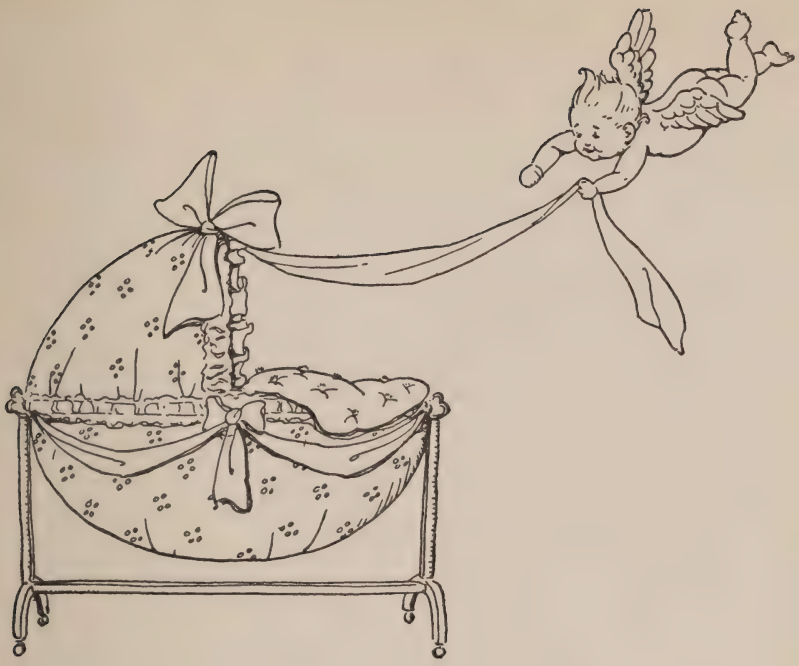
Her hands all covered in her gloves,
Her veil, to keep her hair so flat.
She 's a careful lady-person
When going out to call,
And when she kisses me good-bye
I dare not touch, at all.
I love to watch her start away
In the motor to the city,
And look as far as I can see;
She 's very, very pretty.
Sometimes evenings, she and father
Go to dine or dance somewhere;
I 'm in bed when she says good-night.
It 's like a fairy coming there.
Her dress all thin, with shiny spots
Where jewels laugh in the light;
Her eyes are stars, her hair shines gold;
Her cuddly neck 's so white
She lights up all my shaded room.
She makes me wish she 'd stay,
Or else dress just as beautiful
At home, with me, by day.

It must be odd, to be grown up,
And change so with one's clothes;
But one dare n't wear the lovely ones
At all times, I suppose.

FERRYMAN SLEEP

I MAKE my way at the end of day
Into the cities and towns;
I come from a star, where the dream flowers are,
That grow on the star-dust downs.
Through skies I float, and bring my boat
To each sleepy girl and boy;
My odd little ferry, where each child is merry,
Each bringing his dearest toy.
For I am the ferryman
Tired children's merryman
I am Ferryman Sleep.

We start from a bed, where a tired little head
Closes dark eyes to the light.
We may go where we please; my boat sails all the seas
In the blue dream-land of night.
There are dreams for all fancies, where my ferryboat dances,
In the silver moonlight's shine
And while they are sleeping, young stars will be keeping
A light, for these guests of mine.
For I am the ferryman
Tired children's merryman
I am Ferryman Sleep.



WHO 'S THERE?

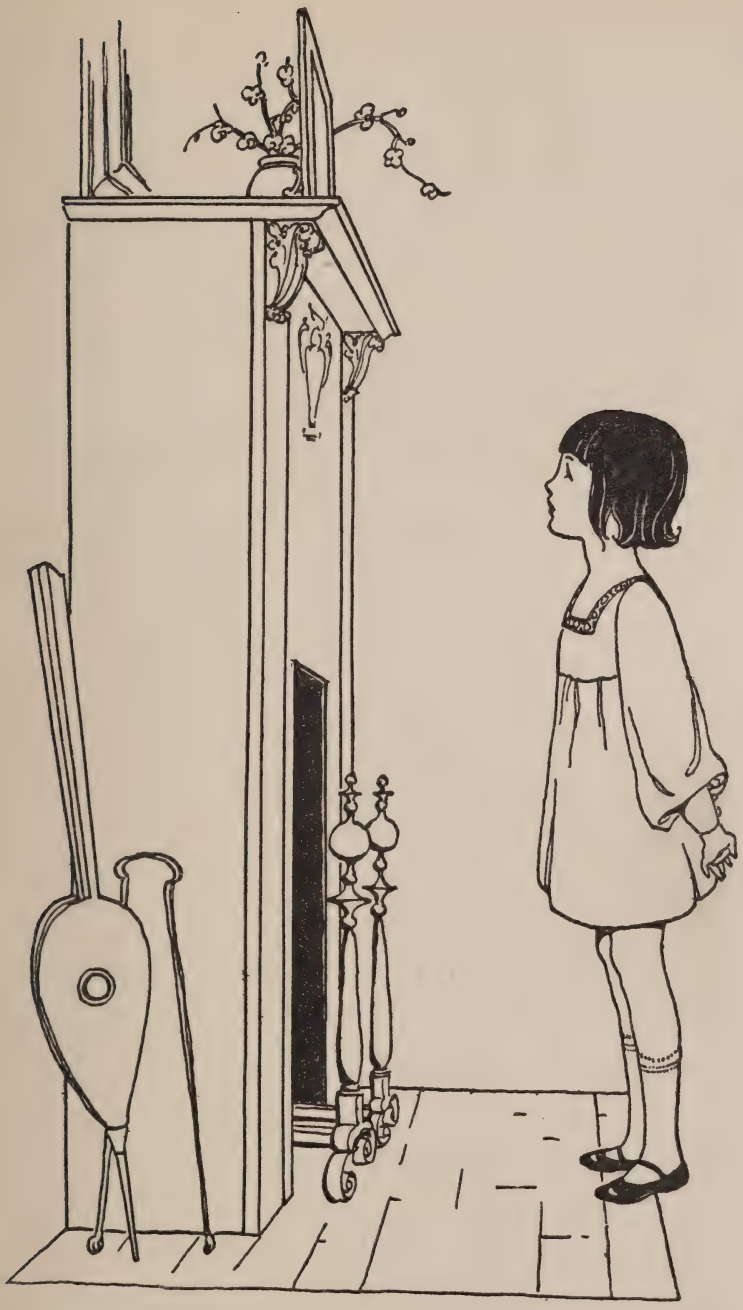
When I came to earth, they wanted me.
And they were ready, too;
With dainty crib, and lovely things
All soft, and warm, and blue.

But after now, when I am old
Where do I go, then?
Will they be waiting for me,
And wanting me again?

MOTHER'S BIRTHDAY

DADDY says to-day is Mother's birthday.
Mother is n't living here,
God took her to His house, where she 'd be well.
But, Oh! if we had her near,
I could sew her something for a present;
I could pick her lots of flowers,
And make her room so sweet;
And see her smile her rainy smile —
No mother smiles like ours.

To-day is Mother's birthday, Daddy says.
I think God lets the Angels know;
They 'll make a party for her; She 'll love that.
And I — I think that I 'll tell Daddy so.



MUSIC

A LADY comes to us, and plays
Upon her violin;
Songs of fairies and of birds.
How does she keep them in
A place so small? They dance, and spring,
And gurgle from that little box. I want to sing,
And laugh, — and sometimes cry.

One day she left it in the room.
I was there, too.
I played it was my own,
And I would do a little song on it. Dear me,
you know

It did n't sound the same at all —
It did n't go!
But still — I want to try.

Music is very hard, I think
And we all love it so.

RAIN

Dropping, dropping,
Dropping down,
From the sky,
Upon the town;
Falling, falling,
Falling far —
I wonder how much
Hurt you are,
Rain-drop, dropping down?

Dropping, dropping, never stopping,
Till you reach my window pane;
You slide along the cold, wet glass,
Then drop, and drop again.
You touch the ground, and slip right in
So soon, I can't tell where you've been.
Rain-drop, rain-drop, does it hurt
When you melt into the dirt?

It is lonely, when it rains,
To hear it falling, falling;
All outside is misty gray;
Mother's voice is calling
"Play inside, it rains to-day"
Yes, it's lonely, when it rains
Dropping, dropping down.

TALK

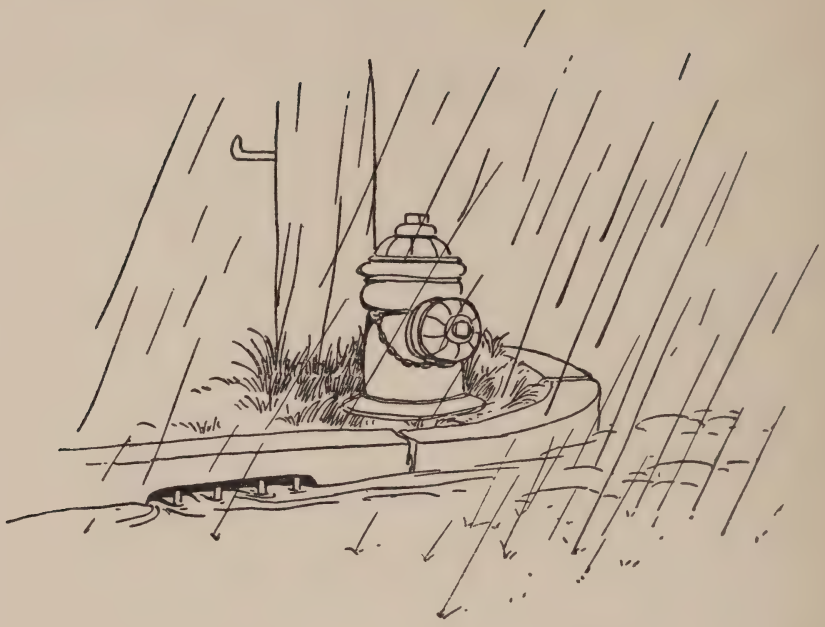
All around me things are talking.
The leaves of little trees
Keep whispering their secrets
To every little breeze;

And when I play beside the brook,
Sometimes for all day long;
There 's not a minute's stillness,
Without the Water's song.

The hummingbirds keep humming,
The bees are buzzing, too.
The wind is whistling in the sky;
The Lark sings all day through.

At evening crickets chirp and chur-r-k,
Until the frogs awake.
The noisy night-owl hoots until
His feather throat must ache.

I wonder what they say and sing
Through night, and daylight hours.
I think they talk and sing, because
They 're glad they live outdoors.



GRAVITY

See the raindrops on the street
Hopping 'round, like little feet.
Each one of them had a very long fall.
But, — it does n't hurt them, at all.
— I wish I were a rain-drop.

SUNDAY

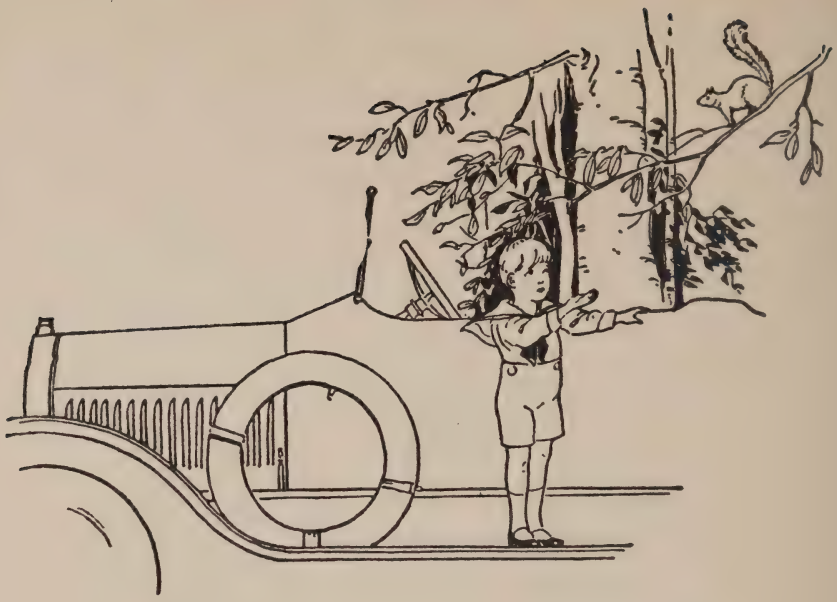
I HEARD a song in church to-day,
"There is a green hill, far away"
And yet the people sat, to stay
To hear the preacher preach, and pray.

If that green hill is really there,
Why don't the people everywhere
Go find it, in the sun and air?
Don't they want to? — Don't they dare?

GROWING

Of all the ways that things may grow
And change, from day to day,
I think the caterpillar grows
In much the funniest way.
Why! first he 's just a crawly bug
With coat all smooth, and brown;

But he creeps into a little house
Of furry, soft, white down;
And when he comes to light again
He 's wonderful to see!
He 's changed! Into a butterfly!
It 's very strange, to me.



THE MOTOR CHILD

I USED to go to rest at home,
And sleep upon my bed
In my own room, the whole night long;
Until the sky grew red
And morning came, with a new day,
Full of food, and fun, and play.

Now, oftentimes, I go to bed
Beneath the shining stars;
They flash along, above my head
Like fairy motor-cars.
Father takes us touring,
We start before it 's light.
The world seems very different
When riding in the night.

Sometimes they tuck me on the floor
Before it 's very dark,
And we go riding 'round in town.
There 's music in a Park;
It sounds all queer and far away,
As if 't was in the sky.
I cannot hear quite all of it
However hard I try.

Then we ride to where the lights
Are dim, and fade away;
But I forget to watch them.
Then, suddenly, it's day!
I am at home again, in bed.
We came back late, I guess;
I don't remember coming in,
Nor getting my night dress.
And yet, I 'm here at home, and day
Is calling me to rise, and play.

Other nights, I 'm put to sleep
In bed, as others are;
But I waken in the country
And don't know where we are.
There are birds, and squirrels, and chipmunks,
And trees, all straight and tall.
The windy grass waves under them
Oh! Oh! I love it all!

And pretty soon we see a house.
"We 'll get our breakfast here"

Says Daddy. And it tastes so good.
But it seems very queer;
The people there are n't friends of ours,
And yet they give us food,
The lady fixes eggs, for me.
— People are very good.

In just a minute we are gone;
The road seems long behind.
Now we come to rolling hills.
We hear the engine grind.
Up at the top, the mountain stands
All gold-white, in the sun.
It looks so big, I feel afraid —
But I am glad we 've come.

Was I at home on yesterday?
Or was it long ago?
Since we have had a motor-car,
I never really know.

ROBIN-RED

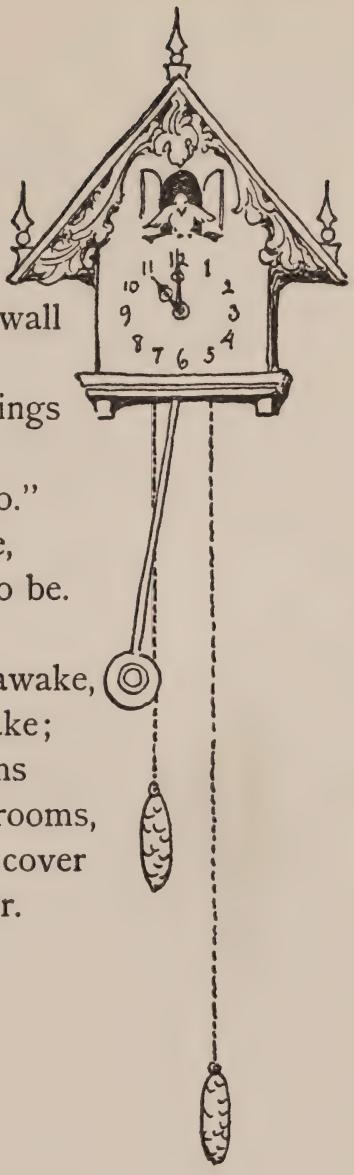
Oh! I know, Mr. Robin,
What 's making you so merry!
From out my neighbor's tallest tree
You 've stolen the reddest cherry.

And I can tell you how I know
That this was done by you:
The cherry was so very red
I see it, shining through.

THE ANGEL

God made His Angels just to stay
In Heaven, I think. Excepting one,
Whom He lent us. And I 've begun
To wonder how He sent away
His very, very nicest one,
My Mother.

THE CUCKOO CLOCK



THE Cuckoo, singing from the wall
Is n't loud, by day, at all.
He bobs his head, and sings
"Cuckoo"
As if he just said "How de' do."
One time, two, or ten, or three,
Where the hands have come to be.

But when you 're in your bed, awake,
Hearing whispers shadows make;
In the dark, a loud voice booms
Like a great gun through the rooms,
Shaking, you crawl below the cover
Until the dreadful noise is over.

THE BULL FROG

The Bull Frog is a cross old thing!
He only grunts while others sing.
The lark's all smiles. His glad clear song
Makes list'ning pleasant, all day long.
He sings while happy children play.
They sleep while Bull Frogs grunt away.

THE MEADOW LARK

When the Winter's nearly gone,
When the sky is gray with rain,
When spots of snow are melting fast,
When grass grows green again;
Sometimes a windy little song
Just quivers in the air.
And then, why then it's Spring, because
The Meadow Lark is there!
A windy song, so sweet to sing
Hearing it, begins the Spring.

THE DREAM-BOATS

Ships, and steamboats, and ferries,
And flat ugly barges I see.
But all of the boats on the river
Are bringing something to me.

Coal to keep warm, on the barges;
Sand for the gardens, and play;
Gravel to make new sidewalks,
Carried a long, long way.

New books to read, new cloth for clothes,
And good things to eat by the score
In boxes and bales, come out of the ships.
The wharf is a busy, big, store.

Different boats in the river
Each time I see them there.
Like dreams they come, and go again,
Sailing off — I don't know where!

RELIGION

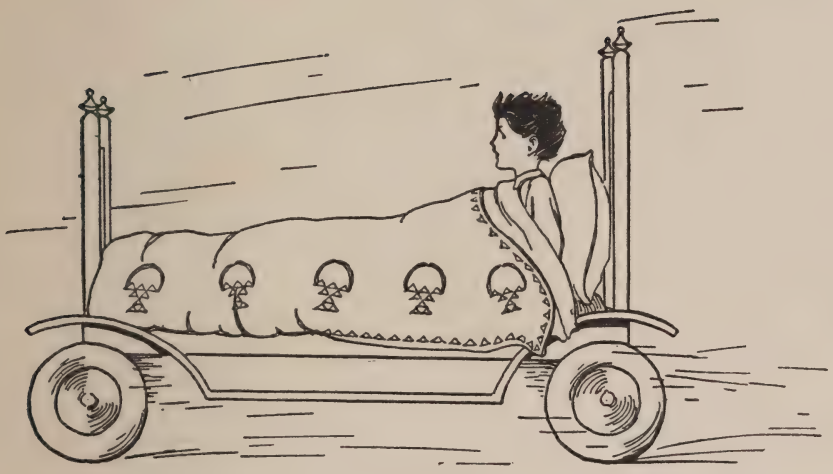
For the Place we call our Home,
And all the Kindness there;
For all the Food and Drink we have;
For all the Clothes we wear;
For Books, and Toys, and Pretty Things;
For Songs, and Dance, and Play;—
And for Things they do when we are sick,
We can say "Thank You" every day
To our fathers, here.

But for the Place we call Out-Doors
And all the Lovelies there;
For Yellow Sunbeams and Gray Rain;
Glad Light, and flying Air;
For Singing Birds and Shady Trees;

For the changing Windy Sky;
For Long cool Nights, between the Days;—
We surely, — surely — ought to try
To thank Our Father, there.

THE SEAGULL

Your only clothes are your feathers;
Your only home is the sea;
And your path is the drifting rain cloud,
As high as the rain can be.
I've watched you fly straight into the West,
Till I could n't see you at all. And I've guessed
To what far lands you may have flown
All by yourself; alone — alone —
The little land birds fly together;
They don't go out in rainy weather.
But you! You spread your wings, and sail,
Your feet tucked up beneath your tail.
You fly on stormy days your best!
Do you ever really rest?
All by yourself — you don't even sing.
You're the loveliest, lonesomest, wandering Thing!



BED

Bed is like a motor-car
Which drives from day to day;
And things I dream are things I see,
Along my journey's way.
In every night-land where I drive
I find new kinds of play.

SNOW

It 's snowing!
The Streets are white, and Houses too!
The Sky is blowing white, and blue.
And everywhere I look, I see
A dancing snow-flaked Fairy.
At least, I think I see Her there
While snowflakes flutter through the air.

Snow Fairies, when they reach the ground,
Grow very small; they can't be found.
I think they sleep, there, until Spring;
Their lullabies the Snow-Birds sing.
And where the Fairies sleep and dream
Fresh grasses spring in bright, new green.

THE VISITORS

I WONDER why they come to us.
They all have tea at home,
Without the fuss of changing clothes.
Perhaps they hate to come.

They never stay so very long;
They hardly eat a bit,
Though there 's a very lot of tea.
What is the use of it?

I pass the cakes, and take the cups,
And hear the things they say;
It 's only about church, and clothes;
And then they go away.

They leave a little ticket
With Dinah in the hall;
Just as they pay the grocery
They have to "pay a call."

They always come on Tuesdays,
And never before three;
They say they 're in a hurry,
But always wait for tea.

They always sit inside the house,
Though all outside is sunny.
They talk, but no one listens —
Women must be funny.

GOOD-MORNING!

While it was dark, a pale gray light
Slipped over a green hill;
And all the Shadows, in the night
Were very, very still.

The light grew braver, turned to gold;
It woke a little bird.
He looked about and saw green leaves
In gentle breezes stirred.

The Shadows went, the Daylight came
To waken all the town.
One sunbeam found the window,
And glistened up and down;

Until it touched the children's eyes.
They wakened, then, and sprang
To Mother's room from Dreamland.
Their sunny laughter rang.

Their mother saw them; then she smiled
As only mothers can.
When she had said "Good-morning!"
Well — then the day began.

HAIR

Did you ever try to braid
A head of yellow hair?
I mean, when it grows on yourself,
And you kept feeling there?

Did it keep slipping, slipping,
Just when you held it tight?
And, try as ever hard you could,
You could n't hold it right?

Did the strands get all mixed up
In back, close to your head;
And, where you wanted it to roll,
Was it all smooth, instead?

Then, when you 'd braided all the hair
And held the rubber band
To put under the ribbon bow,
Did it snap off your hand?

You had to do it all once more
Right from the start again?
You wished with all your heart, that girls
Had short hair just like men?

And when you 'd got it finished
Did your arms and shoulders ache;
And all the hair felt wiggly
As if 't was going to break?

And pretty soon, did Mother come
With a smooth, and then a pull
Make it all right, and comf'table?
Mothers are wonderful!

FAIRY-CLOTHES

I WENT into the garden.
It was a shop, and I
Was wanting fairy clothes;
A kind I thought I 'd try
To find there.
There were lovely yellow things
The brightest I have seen;
Daffodils, and primroses,
And beautiful, cool, green
Maiden-hair.

I made some skirts of daffodils
With dainty yellow fringe,

And tiny waists of petals
With just a greenish tinge.
Johnny-jump-ups made the hats
Cool, light and soft and airy
And quite delightful for the head
Of any happy fairy.

Dresses, pink and lavender,
I fashioned from sweet peas
Shoes of lady's-slippers,
Which could be worn with ease.

Capes of Canterbury bells
Fixed carefully together;
And some of thick brown maple leaves
To wear in stormy weather;

Furs of caterpillar skins
For very wintry days;
And some of pussy-willows
For fairies liking grays.

TINKER–BELL

Whenever fireflies glisten,
Twinkling like the stars,
Tinker-Bell is touring;
They 're her motor cars.

Whenever flowers have dew in them,
Violets, anemones,
Tinker-Bell is thirsty;
She sips the dew from these.

Whenever water ripples
Over pebbles in a brook,
Tinker-Bell is laughing;
She 's gone before you look.

Whenever leaves go rustling
Without a touch of breeze,
Tinker-Bell is dancing
All up and down the trees.

Whenever children sit, wide-eyed,
And still for very long,
Tinker-Bell is singing.
They faintly hear the song.

THE END

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